

Message Text

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SUBJ: PRESSURES ON REDUCING U.S. PRESENCE IN
VIEW OF AUGUST 15 BOMBING CUT-OFF

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: BANGKOK 10131

SUMMARY: AN ARTICLE IN THE NATION OF JULY 9 AND A
RECENT CONVERSATION WITH ASA SARASIN BOTH INDICATE
INTEREST IN REDUCING THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE. THE ARTICLE
REFERS SPECIFICALLY TO THE AUGUST 15 BOMBING HALT DEAD-
LINE AS LESSENING THE NEED TO KEEP MASSIVE U.S. AIR POWER IN
THAILAND. THIS MAY WELL BE THE BEGINNING OF INDIRECT BUT
OFFICIAL RTG FOREIGN MINISTRY EFFORTS TO CUT DOWN THE SIZE OF
OUR FORCE HERE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE THE NATION OF JUL 9 CARRIES AN
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ARTICLE, WHEN WE SUSPECT WAS INSPIRED BY FOREIGN MINISTRY

WHICH HAS CLOSE TIES TO THIS NEWSPAPER, TO THE EFFECT THAT RTG POLICY MAKERS ARE CONTEMPLATING A MOVE TO DISCUSS A PHASE-OUT OF AMERICAN PRESENCES HERE "IN ANTICIPATION OF" AN AUGUST 15 BOMBING HALT. ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, RTG OFFICIALS ARE NOW CONSIDERING WHAT THE RTG STAND SHOULD BE PRIOR TO OPENING DISCUSSIONS WITH US.

2. THE ARTICLE GOES ON TO SAY THAT, "THE OFFICIALS FEEL THAT EVEN IF PRESIDENT NIXON ASKS CONGRESS FOR RENEWED BOMBING AUTHORITY AFTER THE AUGUST 15 DEADLINE, THE NEED TO KEEP THE MASSIVE AIR POWER IN THAILAND WILL BE REDUCED."

3. THE ARTICLE THEN DEVELOPS THE THEME THAT THE AVOWED REASON FOR U.S. PRESENCE HERE IS TO ENSURE NORTH VIETNAM'S COMPLIANCE WITH THE PARIS ACCORDS, WHEREAS IN ACTUALITY, CAMBODIAN BOMBING HAS SERVED AS A WEAPON TO TRY TO BRING ABOUT A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN CAMBODIA. ANNOUNCEMENT OF GKR WILLINGNESS TO TALK WITH SIHANOUK IN TURN MEANS THAT THE NEED FOR U.S. AIR POWER WILL ALSO SOON ABATE.

4. THE ABOVE SENTIMENTS PARALLEL CLOSELY THE VIEWS THAT ASA SARASIN, THE PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER, RECENTLY EXPRESS TO THE CHAGE. ASA STRESSED THAT THE MFA DID NOT WANT TO ELIMINATE COMPLETELY THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE FROM THAILAND, BUT MERELY TO REGULARIZE IT AND, JUST AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, TO REDUCE IT. ASA SAID HE SAW NO NEED FOR 45,000 U.S. MILITARY PERSONNEL TO REMAIN HERE IN- \$3*8,853)6. CHAGE SAID WE DID NOT EITHER AND WOULD BE DISCUSSING THIS WITH RTG WHEN MILITARY SITUATION MADE THIS POSSIBLE. ASA STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF STARING TO REGULARIZE U.S. PRESENCE NOW LEST A STRONGLY NEGATIVE THAI PUBLIC REACTION TO IT DEVELOP IN THE FUTURE, WHICH WILL REDUCE OUR OPTIONS AND MAKE MAINTENANCE OF OUR PRESENT SPECIAL TIES DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE.

5. BEYOND REGULARIZING OUR PRESNECE, ASA EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN TO ENABLE THE THAI TO EARN MORE MONEY LEGITIMATELY FROM U.S. PRESNCE

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RATHER THAN ASKING FOR REPEATED "HANDOUTS" OF FOREIGN AID. HE RAISED THE NOW FAMILIARY THAI VIEW REGARDING THE DESIRABILITY OF THAI FIRMS REPLACING SOME OF THE AMERICAN CONTRACTORS WORKING FOR THE U.S., AND THE LESSER ISSUE OF STOCKING MORE THAI ITEMS IN THE PX AND COMMISSARY (SEE REFTEL).

6. ASA ALSO NOTED THAT HE FELT IT IMPORTANT THAT THAILAND BECOME MORE SELF-SUFFICIENT IN PRODUCTION OF MILITARY

EQUIPMENT. HE SAID THAILAND COULD AND SHOULD EXPAND AMMUNITION AND SMALL ARMS PRODUCTION, AND ITSELF FILL SOME OF THE GAP LEFT BY DECLINING US AID. CHARGE' AGREED.

7. COMMENT: CONFLUENCE BETWEEN THE NATION ARTICLE AND ASA'S EXPRESSED VIEWS TEND TO POINT TO MFA SOURCING FOR THE ARTICLE. THIS MAY WELL BE ONLY THE BEGINNING OF INDIRECT BUT OFFICIAL RTG FOREIGN MINISTRY EFFORTS TO PAVE THE WAY FOR A REDUCED AMERICAN PRESENCE HERE. UNKNOWN FACTOR IS ATTITUDE OF PRIME MINISTER AND SUPREME COMMAND. CHARGE' HAS SEEN PRIME MINISTER ON NUMBER OF OCCASIONS RECENTLY, INCLUDING NEARLY ONE HOUR AT JULY 4 RECEPTION, AND PRIME MINISTER HAS NOT RAISED REDUCTION OF OUR PRIVILEGES ENJOYED BY U.S. MILITARY IN THAILAND. HE IS PROBABLY WAITING FOR US TAKE TAKE INITIATIVE. // MASTERS

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